



## Washington Historical Society Newsletter

SPRING 2000 EDITION

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends:

The year 2000 has arrived, we survived the arrival of Y2K and we are excited about another great program of speakers sought out by the Program Committee for our summer meetings. The Museum Committee and Archivist have equally great plans to put together a display. We also need to make improvements in the way we operate. Four of us attended a technical workshop given by the Museum of New Hampshire History, on accessioning and cataloging museum collections. We learned that we have a lot of work to do. We need to change our system of cataloging, we need to develop a better way to record details when we accept new items for the museum, and from another workshop our members learned that we need to improve the way we store artifacts in our museum. This is not because our predecessors have done a bad job but like in most fields there are new findings and developments. We are a relatively new organization trying to catch up with our town's history.

The Board has decided that a computer is necessary for the cataloging project and we were fortunate to be given one. It's not an up-to-date computer but it is good enough to get us started. We will need to purchase or develop our own software for this purpose and hope to develop procedures this year so work can get started. This is something that will take a number of years to complete depending on how many volunteers we get to help.

I received the sad news that Mary Yusko, one of our past presidents died on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February. She was president from 1985 to 1987. I'm grateful for the leadership and hard work she brought to this Society.

Once again, I would like to thank all of you who are members, who volunteer and who support us financially. Have a great summer.

Al Krygeris

### Museum Committee Report

Spring is on its way!

The Museum Committee has had a quiet winter, but soon it will be time to go back to work again. As always, we are looking for people to host during Museum hours, help supply the gift shop with varied items, and to work on display setup. We are also looking for a committee member.

The display planned for this season is items from the previous century (20<sup>th</sup>). Also, there will be demonstration days to show such crafts as quilting, spinning and weaving.

Our Date for the Orientation Teas is set for June 24<sup>th</sup> at the Washington Congregational Church. Please donate a couple of hours this year to help.



For the Committee:

Vivian Hunter

Mary Krygeris

Shirley Siciliano, Chairperson

## **Manchester Union Leader goes (back) to School**

In March of this year, the 150-year-old District #5 school house in East Washington opened its doors to a group of visitors representing the Manchester Union Leader. Our own Charlene Cobb stepped in to play the multiple roles of hostess, teacher and historian to:

- John Clayton - Union Leader feature columnist and host of NH Crossroads.
- Bob LaPree - Staff photographer.
- Jeff Murray - well known chronicler and historian of one-room schoolhouses in NH. When John Clayton made it known that he was doing an article on one-room schoolhouses, it was Jeff who suggested the early trip to the #5 Schoolhouse in beautiful East Washington, NH.

Charlene's visitors were overwhelmed by the authenticity of our 1850's school house, So much so that John Clayton expressed interest in returning later to do a segment for NH Crossroads. Washington is fortunate to have such a rare antiquity, carefully maintained by the Historical Society.

The school will be open every Saturday during July and August from 1-3 PM. At other times please contact Charlene Cobb at 603-495-3209 to view the school.

## **When the Lights Came On...**

*By Charlene Cobb*

No, not all over the world, but here in the town of Washington. Newport had electric power in 1892 and Hillsboro in 1895. But as with the railroads, Washington was bypassed. That did not negate the fact that there was electricity in town. (No town meetings did not qualify for this type of electricity.) *Portrait Of a Hill Town* states that the earliest source (1894) was a dynamo powered by a water wheel for an individual power plant in Purling Beck Brook in East Washington at the home of H. B. Adams (now Browning's). Other individually owned power plants were scattered around town.

The Town Warrant for 1922 in Article 7 requested ``To see if the town will vote to issue bonds to the amount of three thousand dollars for the purpose of having electric lights in town." The vote was in the affirmative.

This seemed easy enough. But there were other considerations. Bureaucracies were involved - the Public Service Commission for the state, the company selling power - Mutual Public Service of NH, and the NH Power Company - the power supplier. Then there had to be a list of users who would agree to pay five dollars a month for the five years. No, they weren't done yet. The town had to appropriate a certain amount for lighting the town buildings and streets. This amounted to \$150 per month for five years.

In 1938, it was voted to contract with the Public Service Company of NH to ``supply electric current for...lighting of the Town House, the Shedd Free Library the Garage and whatever street lights are decided upon by the town, when such current is available." There was also another article to see if the town would authorize the Selectmen to advance the necessary funds to the School Board to wire whatever schoolhouses they decided upon.

Perley H. Crane was instrumental in finally getting power to Washington. He signed people up, by the time he was ready Public Service wanted more per month. He returned to the people and they agreed. When it happened again, Perley told the company to "put the electricity where it would do the most good". The Selectmen intervened and agreed to pay the difference with the understanding that there would be more street lights (at one time there were 13 to 14).

Reactions to electricity were varied. Most were receptive and eager for the change. Elwyn Young thought that electricity was mighty powerful stuff - it could push it's way up all those hills from Hillsboro. Ernst Cram said that it was a dangerous thing and that he wouldn't give a cent. Why, it might burn your house down. (He later had electricity installed, his house did burn down, but the fire was due to a wood stove.)

During the summer of 1938, work went ahead and the lines were installed. But, before it was turned on, Mother Nature stepped in. The Hurricane of 1938 knocked down most of the lines. Some were repaired and the rest had to be replaced.

Finally, the date was set to turn on the power. The date was to be Perley's - birthday - March 1. But, true to form, that was thrown off and power was not available until March 2, 1939.

Perley spent the day at the backside of Island Pond (near Sand Shore) hauling logs that had been drowned in the hurricane. His family thought they would surprise him. When he pulled into the yard after a long day, his son, Robert, took the lantern and went out to help him put the horses away. Perley asked him why he was using a lantern. Robert replied that it was to see by. Perley laughed and asked why he didn't flick the switch. ``Don't you know that the light is on in the upstairs closet and it shines out the front of the house?"

It still does.

## **Equal Opportunity - 1960's Style**

*From the Journal of Jeanette Hadaway:*

``One amusing incident is recalled in my memory. The ladies of our village (East Washington) decided that they might be needed if available. We wanted to be trained so that we could run the fire truck and put out a fire. The firemen agreed and one Saturday morning we met at the village pond to practice. There were some older ladies, including my mother (Marion Hatton), Nellie Melzard, Elsie Fletcher and Grace Stevens. I was there with my daughter Susie (now Susie Hofstetter), and Julie and Margaret Eccardt from the farm. We practiced with the pump and took turns holding the hoses while we sprayed water into the pond. As we were doing this, someone happened to see a puff of smoke coming up out of the woods near the Cornell's house. We all jumped on the

truck and took off with the sirens screaming, while holding on for dear life. We followed the telltale smoke down a wood's road and there we found two startled men burning wood in a backyard bonfire.



The fireman who was with us told us we could put it out, because the men should have applied for a permit before burning. So, we jumped off the truck, pulled down the hoses, and wet that fire until the yard looked like a sinkhole. The men just stood there looking astonished. Where had all these wild old ladies come from in the middle of the woods?

The funniest part of the story was that we found out later that they were actually in Hillsboro, not our little town of East Washington, and they had a perfect right to have a bonfire. I'm sure they didn't forget that little incident for a long time!"

## **Eccardt Farm - 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

*By Sue Hoffstetter*

When you drive through East Washington and slow your car as you pass the Eccardt farm, do you ever wonder how it all started? Margaret recently shared her story.

Margaret came to the United States in 1928. Her husband, Rudolph, was born in Philadelphia and went to school in Germany. He was imprisoned on the Isle of Mann in England as a civilian prisoner of war during World War I. The two were married in New York in 1931.

In 1950, Margaret and Rudolph were working in New York City and looking for a farm in the country. Margaret was a waitress at the Chalet Suisse and Rudolph was employed at the Hampshire House Hotel as a pastry chef. Margaret's older brother happened to tell Victor and Mary Dyer's nephew about their quest, and the rest is history - the Dyer farm became the Eccardt farm.



*A 1966 farm photo: from left to right - Margaret, Julia, Marianne, George, John, Hans and Rudolph*

When Margaret and Rudolph moved to East Washington in 1950, they had 2 cows and 3 heifers. Margaret soon learned that it would be her responsibility to milk the cows, since it was customary in Germany for the women to take charge of the milking. In Margaret's words, she was "scared stiff". In fact, she had always made it a point to steer clear of cows when she walked through the Swiss countryside as a young girl. However, Margaret took on the milking chores at 7 AM and 6 PM as well as caring for the 1000 chickens that soon became 2000.

Hans Eccardt, a distant relative of Rudolph, came to East Washington to join Rudolph and Margaret in 1955, and it then became his responsibility to do the milking. Julia arrived in March of 1959 and remembers that the snow banks were so high that she couldn't see the cars driving by the house. Hans and Julia were married in April and had their wedding reception at the Valley Hotel in Hillsboro - one of the last big events to be held there. Julia took over the milking after the children - Marianne, George and John - were big enough to stay with Nana (Margaret). The milk parlor was built in 1968 and is now at maximum capacity. The original herd of 2 cows has grown to 206 milkers.

Over the past 50 years, much has changed, and now four generations of Eccardts/Eccard's work together to continue the proud farm tradition. Rudolph died in 1966 leave Hans in charge of the farm's operations. Hans is now semi-retired and has turned the management over to sons George and John and their families. Oh - and Julia continues to take her turn at the milking.

Today the Eccardt farm welcomes visitors to their working farm museum - if you haven't wandered through the fields, stables and barns, you are in for a treat! You will find antique farm implements of all varieties, and Hans will delight you with the history of farming as seen through these old tools of the trade. Kids of all ages will enjoy the animals - from the traditional cows, pigs, goats, sheep, and chickens to the more exotic llamas, emus, peacocks and rare breeds of pigeons.

Truly, this is one of New Hampshire's "Farms of Distinction" providing a living history lesson and it's right here in our town.



Shedd Free Library